Reviewer's report

Title: Regional disparities in infant mortality in Canada: a reversal of egalitarian trends

Version: 1 Date: 16 July 2008

Reviewer: Charlene Robertson

Reviewer's report:

Regional Disparities in Infant Mortality in Canada: A reversal of the equalitarian trends.

The question posed by the authors of this manuscript is well defined. They have examined the effects of changes in public health funding on regional disparities in health status as represented by infant mortality rate. It is considered that this index of infant mortality rate is a good indicator of population health and is susceptible to changes in health care delivery and social programs.

The methods outlined in this study are well accepted and appropriate to reach the objectives of the paper. While magnitude of absolute changes in infant mortality are important these authors have chosen to focus on the relative change in infant mortality as this comparative measure was deemed to be unmodified by the background rate of infant mortality. These relative changes were assessed using the Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient.

The data as established by this paper are sound. The authors have clearly indicated the limitation of the paper with regard to data constraints for one of the provinces. They have compensated for this with supplementary analyses using that data.

The manuscript adheres to the standards for reporting. The data as presented are clear and well defined. There is some minor duplication between the text and tables.

The discussion and conclusion are well balanced and are supported by the data. As well, the limitations are given.

The authors clearly outline the background for this study and carefully go through not only the health care and funding support systems in Canada over the study period but refer to prevailing global results and give numerous references to support the birthweight specific analyses completed.

The title and abstract convey what has been found. The writing is clear and direct.

Discretionary Revisions

The authors might consider minor manuscript length reduction by reducing
duplications found between results and tables. For example, on page 7, the authors review information from Table 1 in some detail which is clearly obtainable from Table 1. This applies to subsequent tables as well.

In addition, the use of the + sign seems variable. For example in Table 4 the + sign is used in some occasions but not in others for the positive Spearman's correlation coefficients.